

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6286

As of February 1, 2008

Title: An act relating to providing an equal opportunity to learn by holding school systems accountable for students missing school.

Brief Description: Requiring school district accountability for students missing school.

Sponsors: Senators Kauffman, Shin and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 1/30/08.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Staff: Kimberly Cushing (786-7421)

Background: Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, on-time graduation rates are used as an indicator of adequate yearly progress. Under Washington law, each school district must account for the educational progress of its students. To achieve this, school districts are required to report annually to the Superintendent of Public Instruction the number of students who graduate and the number of students who dropout in grades seven through twelve.

All Washington school districts must collect data on disciplinary actions taken in each school. Each school must annually document the actions taken to reduce truancy and report it to their school district superintendent. At the request of the SPI, ten districts must submit a full truancy report, but all districts must be able to make their records available on request.

Summary of Bill: By August 1 school districts must file an annual report with the SPI regarding disciplinary and placement actions taken during the prior school year. The report must classify the actions into specific categories. For each instance of disciplinary or placement action, the school district must collect and summarize the category of offense or conduct; the student's age, grade level, race or ethnicity, gender, disability status, and eligibility for free or reduced price lunches and transitional bilingual instruction; the disciplinarian's position, and whether a suspension or expulsion directly affected the student's academic standing. The data for each school must be reported separately in compliance with federal law.

Based on the data filed by the school districts, the SPI must conduct a study for each school year to determine discipline trends. By December 1 the SPI must issue a report on the study to the Legislature. The report must be accessible to the public on the SPI's web site. The SPI must prepare and make available to school districts recommendations for accumulating the

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data in an electronic database, a model report, and a model form for reporting information electronically.

To account for the educational progress of its students to the SPI, school districts must annually report the following: (1) the number of students who did and the number of students who did not receive alternative educational services, enroll in an alternative education program, or earn academic credit while out of school during a long-term suspension or expulsion; (2) an estimate of the number of school-age youth residing in the district but not attending school on a regular basis; and (3) the number of students who did and the number of students who did not earn academic credit while incarcerated or in detention.

When school districts report the dropout rates of students in seven through twelve grade, they must indicate whether the students were eligible for transitional bilingual instruction. The causes or reasons attributed to why students dropped out of school must include categories such as moved to another district in Washington, moved out of state, enrolled in private school, and incarcerated. For the purpose of reporting, students who ceased attending school for the duration of the academic year must be counted as dropouts.

By August 1 each school district superintendent must prepare an annual report documenting the actions taken to reduce truancy for all schools in the district and submit it to the SPI. By December 15 the SPI must submit to the Legislature an annual report on truancy indicating whether all school districts have documented the steps taken to reduce truancy in each student's record. For each petition filed by a school district with the juvenile court, the school district must collect and report a summary on the specific outcomes. The reports must include information by student age, grade level, race or ethnicity, gender, disability status, and eligibility for free or reduced price lunches and transitional bilingual instruction.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 23, 2008.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: In order to address the massive achievement gap between white and minority students, we need further data. For instance, how much time are students spending in the classroom? Is there a correlation between classroom time and how well students do on the WASL, or whether they dropout? Which students are being disciplined and why? Which students are truant? What is the outcome? Are they being brought back to school and given the resources they need? Are these students graduating? This data could be a tool that targets students who need intervention and support, and reduces truancy. While cost is a concern, OSPI's new data system seems to be a logical place to put this additional data.

OTHER: This is an important issue because students who are truant often have other factors that put them at risk. However, sufficient funding needs to be provided; there is currently not enough staff to collect this extensive amount of data. Perhaps a less expensive approach would be to sample a few schools to get a sense of a scope of the problem, or survey evidence-based programs that are effectively addressing behavioral problems

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kauffman, prime sponsor; Jennifer Shaw, American Civil Liberties Union.

OTHER: Marcia Fromhold, Evergreen School District; Peggy Brown, OSPI.